

WELFARE REFORM

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, I rise to continue the discussion that was begun several minutes ago by my freshman colleagues on the status of welfare in this country today.

Mr. President, since the Government launched the war on poverty in 1963, more than \$5 trillion have been invested in the fight. Yet, clearly, poverty is still winning.

Individual dependence upon the State has increased with every Government intervention. Not only are there more people living in poverty today than ever before but, thanks to welfare, whole generations of Americans have lived and died without ever owning a home, holding down a steady job, or knowing the love and support of both a mother and a father.

In the world of welfare, benefits replace work, checks replace fathers, and the Government is the family of first resort.

Illegitimacy has been subsidized on a grand scale, and like other federally subsidized program, it has grown beyond our wildest imaginings, with the number of children now born out of wedlock now topping 30 percent.

Mr. President, the only thing great about the Great Society is its great size, its great cost, and the great power it holds over the lives of people, who are not only bound to poverty but left without hope.

In my home State of Tennessee, I can testify to the fact that the current welfare system has failed Tennesseans.

In Shelby County where Memphis is located, one out of every four families receives a monthly check from the Federal Government. With taxpayer-subsidized teen pregnancy, and dead-beat dads refusing to accept responsibility for their children, most of those newly entrapped children will have little chance of escaping a lifetime of poverty.

Yet, we continue to measure the depth of our compassion by the number of people who are dependent upon a Government Check.

Mr. President, it is time we started measuring compassion by the number of people who are independent, who have hope, and who experience the dignity of work.

It is time we stopped subsidizing illegitimacy and the kind of self-destructive behavior it spawns, and instead encourage responsibility.

It is time we faced up to the fact that the so-called war on poverty is in fact a war on people.

Mr. President, as a physician, I know how crucial it is to match the treatment to the sickness. The wrong medicine can kill, even when prescribed with good intentions.

By continuing to subsidize a system that penalizes people for working, for being responsible for their families, we only ensure that the war on people will continue.

The time has come to look to individuals and to State and local govern-

ments, who work closely with ailing communities and who know better than we, what medicine to prescribe, and how to begin the true healing of the conditions of poverty.

Mr. President, I recently met with a group of law enforcement professionals, from throughout the State of Tennessee, who came to advise me on practical, concrete ways to turn communities around.

These men and women, whose cumulative experience in law enforcement exceeds 500 years, are frustrated by Federal programs that provide welfare benefits to convicted felons. They are frustrated by Federal rule of evidence that hamstringing their efforts to stop the flow of drugs and the violence that results.

They believe parents should be held accountable for the actions of their children, and they want the authority and the resources to take back our public spaces and make them safe for all Americans.

Mr. President, I call upon the American people to listen to their hearts and to hold fast to their vision. Despite the din of rhetoric in support of the status quo, the American people know that they elected us to do the very thing we are now trying to do.

They asked us to return control of their lives and their Government to local communities.

They asked us to spend their money wisely. They asked us to change incentives, and create a welfare system that promotes work, that strengthens families and that provides an opportunity for all Americans to succeed.

They asked us to do these things because they are compassionate, and we know they are holding us, and our proposals, to a high standard of compassion.

But compassion means that we create a genuine safety net for those who, because of circumstances beyond their control, are truly in need.

Mr. President, the original intent and design of the welfare system was to provide a temporary means of support for those struggling between jobs, or facing insurmountable difficulties. Yet, today's welfare families remain on the rolls for an average of 13 years, counting repeat spells.

Obviously, somewhere along the way, we have lost sight of the purpose of welfare.

For the sake of the children, we must restructure the system. And the first step is to require that those who can, go to work and become self-reliant.

Mr. President, in my practice as a transplant surgeon in Tennessee, I witnessed the effects of our misguided welfare system every day.

One out of every three of my transplant patients was below the poverty level. Some tried—and they tried hard—but could not get a job. Some did not want to work. But almost all felt trapped by the current welfare system which pulls families apart.

Caring for these individuals, I heard the same stories, again and again.

Young teenage single mothers would explain that the Government would pay them \$50 more a month if they moved out of their parents' home, away from their family—and away from the only support system they had to pull themselves out of the welfare trap.

Mr. President, the current welfare system slams shut the window of opportunity. Children trapped in the vicious welfare cycle need answers, and they need them now.

By consolidating programs, we can reduce the costs of bureaucracy and get the money to our children. By giving States the flexibility they need to address their unique problems, we empower them to address the specific needs of our children. By empowering people and communities, we strike a blow at the root of violence and crime and give the streets back to our children. Finally, by creating incentives that promote responsible parenting and individual achievement, we give children hope.

Mr. President, there is a bright side to our current fiscal situation. We have been forced to reevaluate a faulty system.

We have been given the opportunity to regroup, to restructure, and to find new ways of helping those in need.

Those of us who are committed to change have behind us the full force of the American people. Those who argue against these changes have nothing on their side but the dismal history of the past 30 years.

Mr. President, I thank the Chair, and yield the floor.

Mr. SPECTER addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Pennsylvania.

FAMILY PLANNING

Mr. SPECTER. Mr. President, I have sought recognition to call attention to the numerous legislative efforts which are now pending which challenge the constitutional right of a woman to choose. And I have decided to do so in light of the action by the House Appropriations Committee last week in eliminating funding for family planning. It had always been my view that whatever political persuasion or position of political spectrum, that the issue of family planning was one where most Americans, if not virtually all Americans, could agree.

When we talk about welfare reform—and there is no doubt about the necessity for welfare reform in America—we are dealing with many children who come into this world where the parents, many married couples, are not equipped to handle them at that stage of their lives both financially and emotionally. And the welfare payments are enormous when we talk about teenage pregnancy, which may be the greatest domestic social problem America faces today, or certainly one of the biggest. Society spends an estimated \$34 billion on behalf of families in which the first